

15
ASSAULTS UPON FREEDOM!

OR,

KIDNAPPING AN OUTRAGE UPON HUMANITY AND ABHORRENT TO GOD.

A

DISCOURSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE

RENDITION OF ANTHONY BURNS.

BY E. H. GRAY, 1855

Pastor of the Baptist Church, Shelburne Falls, Mass.

"God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

SHELBURNE FALLS,
PUBLISHED BY D. B. GUNN.
1854.

SHELBURNE FALLS, JUNE, 15 1854.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

We the undersigned, having listened with great interest to the plain, yet powerful and impressive discourse, delivered by you, on the last Sabbath morning, upon Southern Aggression and the Rendition of Burns, and believing its publication would contribute to advance the cause of liberty, and strengthen true principles, hereby request of you a copy for the press.

With sincere regard, yours truly, .

E. G. LAMSON,
S. J. W. TABOR,
J. B. MONTAGUE,
H. A. PRATT,
W. J. DAVIS,
W. S. CLEMENT,
J. B. BARDWELL,
D. B. GUNN.

REV. E. H. GRAY.

SHELBURNE FALLS, JUNE 20, 1854.

To E. G. Lamson, Esq., Dr. S. J. W. Tabor, and other Committee,

GENTLEMEN,

Your note requesting for the press a copy of my Discourse on the Aggressions of Slavery and the Rendition of Burns is received. The Sermon was not prepared with the remotest idea that it would be published, but if, in your judgment, its publication would contribute, in any degree, to advance the cause of Freedom, it is cheerfully submitted. God grant that the time may be near when such Discourses will no longer be needed.

I am, Gentlemen,

Very Truly, Your Servant,

E. H. GRAY.

DISCOURSE.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. I am the Lord." — LEV. xix: 18.

"Deliver the poor and the needy; rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Ps. lxxxii: 4.

"Hide the outcasts; betray not him that wandereth; let mine outcasts dwell with thee; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler. ISAIAH xvi: 3, 4.

"Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best. Thou shalt not oppress him." — DEUT. xxiii: 15, 16.

"Then Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." — ACTS v: 29.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." — ECCL. xii: 13.

The Ancients had a saying, that "whom the Gods determined to destroy, they first made mad." Then, if we were to adopt their maxim as true, we might well imagine that the doom of Slavery was already fixed—the edict for its destruction already gone forth. For that it is seized with madness, who can doubt, that sees its writhings on the floor of Congress, and hears its howlings among our mountains and along our valleys, on the Soil of Freedom?

There are two mighty, active, antagonistic forces at work in this country—hostile, deadly, irreconcilable foes—SLAVERY and FREEDOM. They are both seeking for ascendancy in this Union. They are both more vigorous, active and self-aggrandizing now, perhaps, than at any other period in the history of this country. The contest between these powers, since the

inauguration of our Federal Government, has only been protracted, never decided. The decision is a great crisis to be reached in our National Hereafter.

So far, Slavery seems to have had the advantage. It has, by despotic legislation, annihilated the manhood of over three millions of our fellow men. It has disrobed them of their humanity, and turned them over, chattels to the tender mercies, not of masters only, but of owners, to be polluted, worked, scourged or sold, as shall best suit the lustful, the wrathful, or the mercenary caprice of their unbridled owners. There is no offence against religion, against morals, against humanity, which may not, by the license of Slavery, stalk abroad “unwhipt of justice.” For the husband and wife, there is no marriage; for the mother, there is no assurance that her infant shall not, at any time, be torn from her breast; for all who bear the name of *Slave*, there is nothing that they can call their own. Without a father, without a mother, almost without a God, the Slave has nothing but a master, and this he is not often left to doubt. Upon such wholesale and unmitigated atrocity, the civilized world has fixed its gaze. And as it beholds Slavery enthroned in this Christian land of Freedom, usurping the chief offices of State; making laws in our halls of legislation; sending forth edicts from the Capitol, and with its crushing heel on the neck of Liberty, we may read in that gaze, the world’s wonder, and horror, and scorn!

But before I proceed further, let me specify some of the particular acts by which Slavery has made assaults upon Freedom.

In 1787, Slavery was inaugurated into the Constitution of America, “the home of the brave, the land of the free!” Provision also was made, so that the owners of slaves should have their property represented in Congress—five slaves counting the same as three free-men. Hence, to-day, the South has delegates in Congress, in consequence of her slaves, equal to the representation of about two millions of Freemen in New England.

In 1792, Kentucky was received as a new State, in which Slavery was established. This was the first act of Congress establishing new Slavery, so far as she had power.

In 1800, the Government purchased of Maryland and Virginia, a tract of land, ten miles square, to be occupied as the Capital of the United States. And in 1802, Congress established Slavery there. And to-day, the Capital of the only Christian Republic in the world; and boastingly declaring in her "Programme of political principles," "That all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;" such a Government has her Capital on Slave Soil!

In 1803, Louisiana was purchased of France, and organized into a Territory, with Slavery in it. This was the first act of Congress in carrying Slavery into new territory, acquired since the Declaration of Independence.

In 1820, Missouri was organized as a State, and applied for admission into the Union, whereupon arose a great battle. The South wished to extend Slavery—the North, to resist it. Hence originated the famous "Compromise" of which we have heard so much. Missouri was admitted as a Slave State; and as the price paid for this accumulation of the Slave power in the Government, the South allowed Congress to enact, or rather the South itself enacted, (for Southern members were leaders in the movement,) "*That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north 36 deg. 30 min. of north latitude, not included within the limits of the State contemplated by this act, SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE, otherwise than as the punishment of crimes, SHALL BE, AND IS HEREBY FOREVER PROHIBITED.*"

That was the "*Missouri Compromise*," in which the North supposed that great Territory was made over in good faith, and forever, to Freedom.

In 1845, Florida was admitted as a Slave State. Thus Slavery went down to the very Gulf of Mexico.

In 1845, also, Texas was annexed. From this territory, Mexico, benighted, Heathenish, Philistine Mexico, had banished Slavery. Christian America seizes it — introduces Slavery, and makes it a State.

Then, in 1847-8, came the war with Mexico — a war begun, and continued, and ended for Slavery. Nor was this satisfactory. It was not enough for Slavery, that it had been constantly and steadily extending the area of its dark domain, — it was not enough that masters had the privilege themselves, to chase and capture the flying Fugitives, but they conspired to turn our Free Soil into Slave-hunting ground, and metamorphose every one of us into Slave-catchers.

This they did in the passage of the “Fugitive Slave Law” of 1850. It was resisted powerfully. God be thanked that it did not pass without a struggle. But the old cry of “dissolving the Union” was set up. The South “screamed, and swagged, and stood on tip-toe, and spread her fingers, and raved, and tore her hair, and assaulted the very heavens with her scary speech.” And it passed; and why should it not? The South demanded it. Nevertheless, it was the greatest stride of all that Slavery had taken yet. It was the most insulting to the North, the most revolting to our political ideas, and the principles of our religion. Nor is this all. “The Fugitive Slave Bill” was the most deadly attack ever made upon Southern Institutions. Ten thousand Abolition Lecturers, sent abroad to every village and hamlet in the land, would have made but a ripple, in comparison to the wave of feeling that is now rolling across the public mind. It has struck earnestness into those who aforetime were indifferent or careless. It has changed conservative men, into men of fast travelling speed, and it has aroused, and is arousing such a tide of indignation as few men soon will care to face. The feeling is not decreasing, it is deepening every day. And the community is beginning to feel, by this infamous mockery of a Law, that they are

driven back upon their sacred, inalienable rights, "*Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!*"

The first Fugitive delivered up by Boston under this act, was THOMAS SIMMS. "Exactly seventy-six years before, Samuel Adams, hearing the report of the great guns, fired by our Fathers at Lexington, lifted up his hands and exclaimed, "Oh what a glorious day is this!" Seventy-six years after this, Boston, at the bidding of Slavery, seized one of her own citizens — one whom God had said, "Thou shalt not deliver up to his master, but he shall dwell with thee, even within thy gates, where he shall choose." Boston, which holds as her most sacred relics, "The Cradle of Liberty" and "The Tree of Liberty," kidnapped on her soil, and against her own laws, and carried back a man to a Georgian Jail, to be scourged, till even the executioner cried out, "Hold, hold, the man will die." Let him die," said the master, with an oath, "beat on." What a glorious deed was that — not for Algiers, or Warsaw, or Madrid, but for Boston.

But Slavery has not yet enough. Freedom is not sufficiently humbled. The climax is not complete. It speaks again, and lo! the "Nebraska Bill" appears, by which Liberty is cloven down at a single stroke, in the broadest territory in all our land. Fitting time, for a deed so infamous, the midnight. For it was a deed of darkness! Had it been perpetrated in the daylight, it should have been on the 26th of May, the day of the Great Eclipse. Fitting accompaniments to such an act of perfidy, "the darkening of the sun, the moon withdrawing her light and the stars falling from heaven!" Fit persons they, who did the deed: drunken, brawling, kidnapping politicians, disgracing Congress, outraging humanity, and defying Almighty God! By this perfidious act, they violated a most sacred compact — one which was devised, and sealed, and delivered, by men of the Slave States. Such as LOUIS McLANE, of Delaware; WILLIAM PINKNEY, of Maryland; CHARLES F. MERCER, of Virginia; JOHN GAILLAIRD, of South Carolina;

HENRY CLAY, of Kentucky ; with JAMES MUNROE as President, and WILLIAM H. CRAWFORD, JOHN C. CALHOUN and WILLIAM WIRT — all Southern men, in the Cabinet — to urge it forward. The Compromise was a Southern measure. The humbled North stood by and obsequiously bowed acquiescence. Slavery demanded that compact then, and it was made. Now, Slavery demands it to be broken, and it is broken. And by breaking it, there is doomed to perpetual Slavery, a territory as large as all the thirteen States that fought the battles of the Revolution, and one hundred and twenty-one thousand square miles besides !

Thus, from 1787 to 1854, has Slavery been constantly making assaults upon Freedom, and at each successive step it has become more grasping, more imperious, and more insulting. And I ask, in the name of God, when and where shall it stop ? Why, if it were possible, it would go up to heaven and lay hold and drag down into Slavery, fugitives from before the very throne of God ! Nay, more, if it could, it would make a law to press the Angels into the service, and make kidnappers of them. And if the Angels were like some of our Northern politicians, they would haste to do the bidding of the Slave power and send back the spirits of every Fugitive that escaped from bondage !

Here allow me to present a thought by way of contrast. It is from our illustrious Senator.*

“Far away in the East, at the gate-way of day, in dark benighted India, Slavery has been condemned. In Constantinople, the queenly seat of the most powerful Mahommedan Empire, where barbarism still mingles with civilization, the Sultan has fastened upon Slavery the stigma of his disapprobation. The Barbary States of Africa, occupying the same parallels of latitude with the Slave States of our Union, and resembling them in the nature of their boundaries, their productions, their climate, and the *peculiar institution*, have been changed into Abolitionists. Algiers also has been dedicated to Freedom.

* Charles Sumner.

Morocco, by its untutored Ruler, has expressed a desire, stamped in formal terms of a treaty, that the very name of Slavery may perish from the minds of men. And only recently the Dey of Tunis has decreed the total abolition of Slavery throughout all his dominions."

Now, while these barbarous and uncivilized nations have been casting down the Moloch of Slavery, and manfully declaring for Freedom, Christian America—with all the light and refinement of the nineteenth century—with the Bible in her home, and the Gospel of the blessed God in her heart, has adopted anew this barbarism, which these barbarous tribes have renounced, and deliberately, by the enactment of law, doomed an immense territory to the curse of perpetual Slavery!

"Oh Freedom, thou hast fled to barbarous shores,
And we have lost our reason!"

The booming of the midnight guns at Washington, over the passage of the "Nebraska Bill" had scarcely died away, when a man comes from Virginia to Boston to seek his slave. On the twenty-fourth day of May, at night, as ANTHONY BURNS was returning home from his lawful and peaceful calling, he was suddenly seized by six ruffians—charged with having broken into a jeweller's shop—forced to the Court House—thrust into an upper story, and immediately surrounded by men armed with bludgeons and revolvers. Here he was charged, not with being a fugitive from justice, but a fugitive from Slavery. The kidnappers did not dare to make that charge when seizing him in the street, lest the enraged populace should have torn the victim from their grasp. The man who professes to be owner of this body and soul, confronts him. The Marshal summons his posse to guard this "*Thing*," to keep it from running away, or others from running away with it. A Judge of Probate, and Professor or Lecturer, in our State University, comes forward to act as Judge and Jury. The Court House was filled

with United States soldiers—Marines from the Navy-Yard, and troops from the island. The Court “sat with bayonets at their backs or swords at their bosoms. Drunken soldiers charged bayonets on the witnesses, on the counsel and on strangers, who had rights where the soldiers had none.” Boston was in a state of siege. Thousands of people came in from the surrounding country to look on the spectacle and see the sacrifice. Stirred with deep indignation at the insult offered Freedom, and the base prostration of the City of Pilgrims at the feet of the Slave Power, the populace rush to the Court House and endeavor to effect an entrance, but are beat back ; and in the melee one man, fighting for Slavery, is killed. Business was suspended, stores closed, the streets blocked up, and the citizen soldiery under arms. The Sabbath comes—the blessed, holy, peaceful Sabbath. This Fugitive is a professed Christian—a member, it is said, of a Baptist Church—a member of the *same Church with his master, Col. Suttle*, and a *Minister !* Hence he believes in prayer ; and agreeably to the direction of the Apostle Paul, who says, “Remember them that are in bonds, as being bound with them,” he asks for the sympathy and the prayers of his fellow Christians. Some heeded that request, and some did not. If Paul himself had been there, bound with a chain as he was at Rome, and made a similar request, some, no doubt, would not have heeded it. But neither prayers, nor pleas, nor justice, nor humanity could avail. Slavery said, “Give me that victim !” The kidnapper said, “Give me that man !” The slave-driver said, “Give me that ‘thing !’” And the authorities of the city of Boston, and the government of Massachusetts, and the government of the United States, obeyed, and gave up the victim, and the chattel, and the man. Now the military of the largest city of New England is called out to send a man into Slavery. Soldiers load their pieces to fire into the bosoms of citizens, whenever a drunken officer should give command. And one captain, more furious than the rest, did order his company to fire upon the

people ; but the order was countermanded and thus the flowing of blood was prevented. Thus armed with cutlasses, and revolvers, and muskets, and cannon ; fifteen hundred soldiers march one poor “nigger” (for they say “nigger,” at the South) from the Court House, (the Boston Slave-Pen,) through fifty thousand spectators down to the wharf, where a steamer and a United States vessel, manned with United States officers, were anxiously waiting to carry a man back into Slavery. And while they sailed out of Boston harbor, “the great stone finger of Bunker Hill” — the monument of blood and of Freedom, — stood silently and mockingly, pointing to the skies.

“Hail Columbia, happy land ;
 Hail ye heroes, heaven-born band,
 Who fought and bled in Freedom’s cause,
 And now the storm of war is gone,
 Enjoy the peace your valor won.
 Let Independence be your boast ;
 Ever mindful what it cost ;
 Ever grateful for the prize,
 Let its altar reach the skies.
 Firm, united, let us be ;
 Rallying round our Liberty.
Hail Columbia, HAPPY LAND !”

Just think. Why are the Lectures of the Law School in our State University, interrupted for a whole week ? Why, the Lecturer has gone to help Mr. Suttle catch his slave. What is that Court about, guarded by United States officers and soldiers ? Helping Mr. Suttle catch his slave. Why are the United States troops and marines brought into the city ? To help Mr. Suttle catch his slave. Why is the Court House in Boston made a slave-pen ? To aid Mr. Suttle in catching his slave. Why is a man sabred, a horse stabbed, and a man killed ? They were done in helping Mr. Suttle catch his slave. Why were the military ordered out, and one company ordered to fire upon the people ? To overawe the populace, and help Mr. Suttle catch his slave. Why was the city put under martial law, stores

closed and business interrupted? All to help Mr. Suttle catch his slave. What were fifty thousand spectators crowded into the streets of Boston, doing? Seeing the City Government, and the State Government, and the United States Government, catch Mr. Suttle's slave. Why are the United States Marshal and a body of the police going off in the United States cutter? To comfort Mr. Suttle, and help him keep his slave!

Now, I ask if this demonstration is not one of the most supremely ridiculous farces ever played in this country before High Heaven? Though to the poor Fugitive, it was no farce. With him it was a question of Liberty or Slavery; and the result proved it was Slavery.

Here, then, a most important question presents itself. Ought the Fugitive Slave Act (I will not call it a law) to be obeyed? No. Humanity says no. Conscience says no. God says no. This Slave Bill is no law; it is an abuse of human rights, an act of tyranny which would have disgraced the reign of Nero—it is a barbarous invention worthy of eternal night—it is an atrocious, villainous assault upon the rights of Freemen and Freedom—an act alike dishonorable to man and odious to God!

Just reflect. Our Fathers not only would not obey, but actually resisted the "Stamp Act and Tea Tax;" and these were *virtues*, compared with this kidnapping, heaven-defying Slave Bill. They caught the Commissioner who issued Stamps and made him take a solemn oath that he would not execute his commission—would not issue a single Stamp; and he kept his oath. Would that the Commissioners of the Slave Bill were served in the same manner.

This, in the case of our Fathers, was not only refusing obedience, but actual resistance to law; and yet posterity does not condemn, but sustains them in it, blesses them for it, and on every fourth of July, gets up a regular glorification in commemoration of their patriotism and bravery. If they did right in resisting laws, much more shall we in refusing obedience to this most infamous of Bills.

The Fugitive Slave Bill requires me to violate the Law of God, therefore I am absolved from it.

Any Law which requires me to disobey God, is not, and cannot be binding. This is not new or doubtful doctrine. This truth is so clear and self-evident, the marvel is, that any should fail to see and acknowledge it.

Philosophers and Moralists have fully developed it, and Jurists themselves, have frequently confessed it. Says Calvin, "If Rulers command anything against the Lord, *it ought not to have the least attention.*" Says President Edwards the younger, "Rulers are bound to rule in the fear of God, and for the good of the people; and if they do not, then in *resisting them we are doing God service.*" Says Blackstone, the great expositor of English Law, "The Law of Nature being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times. *No human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this*; and such of them as are valid, derive all their force and all their authority, mediately and immediately from this original."

And then one greater than Blackstone, or Edwards, or Calvin, and far more authoritative, has said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Hence I repeat, when the law of the land requires me to disobey God, I am not bound to obey it.

There is, therefore, a *Higher Law* to which we are held amenable, above every human law. There is a code higher and more imperative than the Constitution of America and the Declaration of Independence: it is "the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSE, and the DECLARATION OF ALMIGHTY GOD."

Away then with the dogma, that we know of no higher law as a rule for political action, than the Constitution of the United States! Against that perilous principle, by whomsoever adopted or sanctioned — against that dogma so destructive to liberty, and to all true manliness, I protest in the name of conscience and of God! there is a higher law, and you know it my hearers; a

law to which all men owe obedience in all the activities of life and all the relations of society. There is a difference between right and wrong, between justice and injustice, between righteousness and wickedness ; older than the Constitution, — older than all human compacts and enactments, — older and more lasting than the world itself, — it is eternal as God ; — and that difference, sanctioned and guarded by the Divine Justice, is the Higher Law. In vain you may affect to be ignorant of it. Whatever you do, wherever you go, it attends you like the presence of God ; every moment it hangs over you with its inexorable demands, and with the mysteriousness of its sanctions. THE HIGHER LAW ! There it is ! you cannot escape from it ! It forces itself continually upon your intuition. That HIGHER LAW ! And when you pass away from earth and time, and find yourself surrounded by the mysteries of Eternity ; the Higher Law will meet you there and reckon with you.

But how is it to be known, and who is to decide when the law of God, and the law of the State, come in conflict ? Shall the State decide ? certainly not ; for different governments, like different men, disagree as to what the Law of God teaches, and the same government often repudiates what it once demanded. As England, for instance, was formed in an age, embracing worship to the Virgin Mary, and England in the next, denounced it as idolatry, the State therefore cannot be trusted to decide whether a given law contravenes the law of God or not. Can the Church be trusted to decide that matter ? Not safely. For the Church, like the State in one age, has decreed and enjoined what the Church in another age has declared impious and rejected with scorn.

Then who shall decide when the laws of God and the laws of man conflict ? Each man for himself, I answer. The State cannot decide that matter, the Church cannot, but every man must decide for himself, taking God's Word for his standard.

This is a point which I believe can be sustained fully anywhere and at any time.

Now do you doubt whether in aiding to send back a Fugitive to Slavery, you disobey God? Turn back and read the texts simply, they are sufficient to decide the case.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Can this command be observed in any sense, while you aid in thrusting your neighbor into a bondage the most cruel that ever cursed the earth?

Again, “Deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked.” Do you not violate both the letter and the spirit of this injunction, when you seize “the poor and needy,” and deliver them into the hand of the wicked?

Again, “Hide the outcasts, betray not him that wandereth, be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.” If there is an outcast on God’s earth, it is the Fugitive Slave; if then you seek out his hiding place, and betray him and give him up to the spoiler, do you not disobey this plain command of God? And will not the blood of your brother cry to God from the land of the spoiler?

Once more, “Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall DWELL with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best; thou shalt NOT OPPRESS him!” Can any thing be more to the point? Here is a provision expressly for the fleeing Fugitive, “Thou shalt not deliver him up to his master, he shall dwell with thee, thou shalt not oppress him!” Can this declaration of the Most High, be made, in the slightest degree, to harmonize with the requirements of the Fugitive Slave Bill?

Hence, I conclude, that this Fugitive Bill is at variance with, contravenes, scorns and overrides the law of God. Therefore *I cannot obey it*,—I would not have others obey it. I do not say *resist it*; I have not said so, I do not mean to say so. I only say, DO NOT OBEY IT! if you do, you disobey God, and he will hold you accountable for your sin!

Just see, here is a man dwelling by my side who is claimed by the person he formerly served. He is pursued by the officer.

He is on the point of being taken. He comes to me for help and counsel. The law of Congress says to me, "you shall not give it. The law of the land says, "you shall seize that neighbor at the call of the officer, and deliver him up to his pursuers." Now the question for me to decide is, is that law RIGHT? Not was it passed with the proper formalities, or certified by the proper officers, or does it harmonize with the other existing laws, or is it likely to be enforced by the arm of the State. That is not the question. Is that law RIGHT? Is it equitable and just? Does it agree with the law which God has given me, when he commands me to "love my neighbor *as myself*?" If I refuse to give aid and protection to that man, but on the other hand, seize and deliver him to his master, shall I do what God approves?

To answer these inquiries, I turn back and read in the text, "Thou shalt *not deliver unto his master*, the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee even among you, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best. THOU SHALT NOT OPPRESS HIM!" Do you say that this specific requirement terminated with the Jewish polity. I reply, if the *principle* were right *then*, it must be *now*, for God is the same; and if the LAW required that humane act, how much more the GOSPEL.

But further, let us inquire to *what* am I required to send this man back? To the endurance of a system which no philanthropist can contemplate without a shudder,—to a system which puts the man entirely into the power of the master, to be used by him as he wills, only his life being preserved,—to be sold by him when he will, and to whomsoever he pleases, to have his wife and children torn from him and sold, at the pleasure of the master—wife and children as dear to him, as yours and mine are to us. It is a system that forbids its subject to read or write, that keeps him ignorant, and depends upon that ignorance for its own preservation,—that debars him from all accumulation and progress,—that dashes every pleasure by the sense of in-

security, — that takes the joy from every hope by hanging it on another's will, — that darkens every prospect by the shadow of a constant and inevitable fear, — that takes away the Bible by legislative authority, and thus destroys the right to think, act or live for God and Eternity, only as it is done through the caprice of another. Such is the system to which I am to send back a man, and it will doubtless be administered with double rigor, because he has once escaped its grasp. Ought I to do it? Do the laws of humanity and of God exact this at my hand?

If I could return him as Paul did Onesimus to his master, “*not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved,*” and he would go, then my duty might be plain. But he does not choose to go back, and his master does not ask him to come as a “brother beloved,” and “above a servant,” but as a “*thing,*” — a “*chattel,*” robbed of all the rights and attributes of manhood. The man implores me not to send him back. Why should I send him? Why should I do him this mortal injury? He is my brother by creation and my brother by redemption! Both of us are responsible to the same Heavenly Father—both of us are looking for the same Eternity. Why should I send him to a bondage which he abhors, and I abhor,—a bondage not founded in equity, not accepted by himself and not obligatory upon his conscience nor mind?

Nay,—nay, I cannot do this great crime. I should trespass against man. I should sin against God! But the Government will be imperiled by refusing obedience to law. I cannot help that. The Government should not enact such laws. I am to obey God's law, though the world shake beneath my feet. He and he only, who does right under God's Government is safe. It is right to obey Magistrates as the officers of society, so long as they rule justly. “Put them in mind,” says the Apostle, “and I obey this injunction to-day, to be subject to principalities, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to *every good work!*” But God has given us a law that is primary; a law that concerns us as immortals; that supersedes every other. When human law

conflicts with this, we must say with Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men." And God's law is decisive, unequivocal, always binding upon each one of us; revealed to the conscience as light is to the eye. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There is no other law on earth or in Heaven, greater than these, and no other consequently, that can supersede them. But further, we not only have the precepts of the Bible, but also the *example* of good men, inspired men, for authority in refusing to obey wicked and unrighteous laws.

Nebuchadnezzar set up an image in the plain of Dura, and commanded all the people when they heard the sound of music to fall down and worship the image, the king had set up; and it was added, "Whosoever would not fall down and worship, should be cast into a furnace of fire." There were three worshippers of Jehovah there,—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were "Higher Law" men. What now should be done? The law of the kingdom conflicts with the law of God. The law of the kingdom says, "fall down and worship an image." The law of God says, "Thou shalt not bow down to any graven image." Here was an alternative. They decided to obey God and consequently refused obedience to the law of the land. They were cast into the burning flame, and came out again with not so much as the "smell of fire upon them." Thus God has taught us conclusively, that it is *right* to refuse obedience to the laws of the land, whenever they conflict with the laws of heaven.

Again: Darius made a decree that any person who should ask a petition of any God or man, for thirty days, save of the King, should be cast into a lion's den. This writing was signed and sealed, and became a law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Daniel was a man of God, and therefore a man of prayer; what should he do? The law of the land declared that he should not pray for thirty days. Daniel, likewise, was an officer of government—the first in the kingdom—next to

the King ; hence, a refusal on his part to obey the law, might be greatly prejudicial to the interests of the kingdom. It would be casting peculiar contempt upon the laws, upon the King, and encouraging disobedience in others. But Daniel, also, was a "Higher Law" man. He therefore refused obedience to the laws of that great kingdom, which interfered with his sacred obligations to God. And this he did, as he supposed, to the loss of both his office and his life. Ah, Daniel would not have made a good "United States Commissioner." He would have resigned his office and his life, I think, before he would have disobeyed God in sending Burns back to Slavery.

So of Peter and the other Apostles who were commanded to preach no more in the name of Jesus ; they gave no heed to this command of the authorities, for a greater command, and, as they imagined, far more authoritative, required them to preach the Gospel to every creature. And when the officers laid hold of them and thrust them into prison for disobedience to law, God sent his angel and brought them out, and said, "Go speak to the people all the words of this life." And they went forth and preached. Did they do right? They acted in defiance of human law, and yet, in obedience to God. And when they were brought before the court to answer for their contempt of law, and the authorities said, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?" they were prepared to reply, "We ought to obey God rather than man!" And they did.

Hence I contend, yielding obedience to the "Higher Law," the law of God in preference to human law, when they conflict, is no new doctrine—it is as old as Christianity. It is alike authorized by the word of God, and the example of holy men in every age. It has beamed like a star over every martyr-fire. It has throbbed as the life of every Reformer,—in Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, and the Pilgrims. It has wrought out the grandest achievements in the annals of time. By it, men have risen up against tyrannies, overthrown oppressions, cast off des-

potisms, established free States, illustrated the power of Christianity, and wrought out immortality! Demagogues may decry it, political interests may heave against it; but they cannot overthrow it. The clouds of sophistry may hide it for a time, but not forever; the fury of the violent, bound to the oppressor, may be poured upon it, but God's law shall stand, in spite of all human enactments, FOR GOD ONLY IS GREAT!

What now shall be done? Slavery is in the Capital; the Fugitive Slave Bill is in full force; it makes us all kidnappers; the Nebraska Bill has just thrown open an immense territory to the cause of Slavery, and the Federal Government is at the feet of the Slave Power. What shall be done? I answer—

1st. Refuse obedience to the Fugitive Slave Act. To execute it, is not only to rob man of his manhood, but God of his glory.

2d. As freemen, forget minor distinctions, relinquish party considerations, disregard past hostilities, rise in your might, go to the Ballot-Box, and wrest the country from the mighty conspiracy of Slaveholders.

3d. Let the men who have voted for, and otherwise aided the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Nebraska Bill, &c., go into profound retirement. Let them be "broken on the wheel of public opinion." Let them be politically disfranchised, now and forever.

4th. Let those who have dogged the Fugitive, and seized him, and sent him back to bondage, be followed with the contempt, and indignation, and abhorrence of the people. Let the child flee from him, and men point at him in the street, and old age leaning on its staff, hasten out of his way. And God grant that in his waking hours—in solitude and in company—in his silent meditations, and in the public affairs of men wherever he turns—there may his victim stare him in the face. From the distant rice-fields and sugar-plantations of the South, may his cries beneath the lash, and his moans at the thought of

liberty once his, but now vanished from him, pursue him like a spectre, repeating the tale of his fearful doom and forever sounding in his ears, "Thou art my destroyer." And when he lies down to sleep, in his dreams may he see his victim come to his bed-side, and stretching out his black, brawny, nightmare hand, lay it on his conscience. It may prevent his sending others back.

5th. Rise up and demand the repeal of the infamous Fugitive Slave Act and the Nebraska Bill, and all the compromises with Slavery. Demand the abolition of Slavery at the Capital, and in all the Territories, and then go to work to blot it out from the Constitution. Let the Freemen of the North rise up in their majesty and assert their rights, and *it can be done!*

Men and brethren, do you believe this great wickedness will always continue? Remember, the wheels of destiny turn not back. Mankind are marching toward Freedom. Each revolution is a step. Lay down your ear, as another has expressed it,* to the great ocean of humanity, and hearken to the ground swell which is going on there. That mighty roar of waters, and eddying tides, and chafing currents at the bottom of human destiny, does not augur peace to oppression, or safety to the tyrant!

Thank God there are signs of promise. There is a bow forming on the cloud. But a few years ago, mobs tore down printing-presses if they dared boldly to proclaim anti-Slavery doctrine, and destroyed them. Now, almost every press in the North is as anti-Slavery as those which the mobs demolished. Once, the suspicion of abolition would bring any man home from Congress, and keep him there. Now, for the most part, men who would go there from the North, must have, at least, an anti-Slavery taint. Once, Legislators resisted every mention of the subject, and he was deemed scarcely less than a maniac, who, in the Legislatures of the Free States, dared to introduce

* Theodore Parker.

the inflammatory topic. Now, Legislatures are anti-Slavery batteries and give annual broadsides of anti-Slavery resolutions. Once, pulpits dreaded the dangerous doctrine; but now the pulpit, to a great extent, is the exponent of Liberty, and therefore the odium and hatred of all who fear the advancing march of Freedom. In other days, mobs broke up anti-Slavery meetings, destroyed the houses of colored men; but now the enraged populace defend fugitive slaves and gird about their hiding-places. And where they are unable to protect a victim, they gather about him by thousands to look on the spectacle.

Now mark the ominous fact. When it requires fifteen hundred men under arms, and at a cost of forty thousand dollars,* to send back one single fugitive into Slavery; and this is done in the presence of fifty thousand spectators, remember the *beginning of the end* has come. A few such victories on the part of Slavery, would ruin the "peculiar institution."

This, then, is no time for Freemen to hesitate — no time to falter. It is a time for active vigilance, unceasing exertion, unflinching perseverance — a time for mighty wrestling for RIGHT, without period or pause, till Slavery is vanquished and the Nation is free!

The South, by the repeal of the "Missouri Compromise," has taught us that all acts of compromise are repealable statutes, equally with other acts of Congress. Hence, Congress may abolish Slavery to-morrow at the Capital, and in all Territories, for anything that a preceding Congress has done.

The hour is struck! The night cometh and then the morning! And when the morn of Freedom breaks on *all* the Nation, the shout of an host shall go up to heaven, "JEHOVAH HAS TRIUMPHED," THE BONDMAN IS FREE!

* Some estimates are higher.